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For Immediate Release
September 28, 2005

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Sen. Toy announces state budget completed on time without new fees or tax increases

Education is top priority, other services spared from deep cuts

LANSING – The state Senate has completed its work on the fiscal year 2005-06 budget, approving spending plans that balance the budget without the need for increased fees or taxes.

“We made a commitment to taxpayers that we would force government to live within its means, just as Michigan’s families have to,” said Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming. “The first question we answered was how much money we had available. Then we had to determine Michigan’s priorities and focus our limited resources without turning to taxpayers for more money.”

For the third budget year in a row, Senator Laura Toy, R-Livonia, working with local school leaders led the fight to protect hold harmless funding, also known as 20j money, from cuts proposed by the governor. Since entering the Senate, Toy’s actions have helped to save more than \$20 million in hold harmless funding for the Clarenceville and Livonia Public Schools.

“During these challenging economic times we need to be careful with every penny,” Toy said. “I think the Legislature has come to an agreement on a fair and balanced budget that is in line with the priorities of Michigan residents.”

Among the highlights of next year’s budget, the Senate:

- Increased funding for K-12 public schools by \$175 per pupil.
- Protected hold harmless (20j) funding for public school districts.
- Restored funding for school bus safety inspection.
- Increased funding for special education programs.
- Increased funding for school lunch programs.
- Provided a funding floor of \$3,650 per student for public universities.
- Protected the Michigan Merit Award program from the governor’s proposed changes.

(more)

- Restored funding for hearing and vision screening services for Medicaid recipients.
- Restored \$1.3 million for fuel inspections and the hiring of additional inspectors to ensure customers are receiving the proper quantity and quality of fuel they paid for.
- Placed restrictions on state employees' out-of-state travel.
- Required the Department of Management and Budget to develop a plan for more effective assignment and authorized use of state vehicles.

Toy also sponsored an amendment to the school aid budget that will allow school districts to receive funding for enrolling students from other states who have been evacuated to Michigan due to a natural disaster even if they enroll passed the normal deadline to be counted by the district for funding.

The budgets are expected to be signed by the governor prior to the start of the new fiscal year, which starts Oct. 1.

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